

《Schools guide villagers on path out of poverty》

HOHHOT, May 11 (Xinhua) -- Wang Zhichun, 48, raises pigs, cows and sheep in his newly-built pen in a village near the city of Ulanhot in north China's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region.

"I am now confident my family will have a good life," he said.

Last year, his family's disposable income reached nearly 54,000 yuan (about 7,800 U.S. dollars). His 19-year-old son Wang Jingyu received treatment for diabetes and found a job as a hairdresser in the city.

"Two years ago, we didn't have much money. We grew corn and sometimes could barely feed ourselves," he said.

In November 2015, the Wang family was registered by the local government as living below the poverty line. "Xu Jianmin, vice principal of Ulanhot Vocational School, was designated to help our family out of poverty. He came last March to show me some options," Wang Zhichun said.

"I chose what crops to plant and animals to raise, and Xu paid for them," he said.

As Wang Zhichun had some farming experience, he chose four piglets, ten calves and 100 lambs. "I earned 2,000 yuan selling the pigs, and then bought another four," he said. "The cows and sheep have given birth to two calves and 67 lambs, which I will raise and then sell."

Xu helped the Wang family build 360 square meters of pens and they received a subsidy of 100 yuan per square meter from the local government.

The family was eligible for the assistance due to illness: Wang Zhichun suffered from heart disease and high blood pressure, his wife was deaf in one ear, also had high blood pressure as well as rheumatism, and Wang Jingyu had diabetes.

"My son was diagnosed five years ago, and we spent over 50,000 yuan on his treatment during the first year," Wang Zhichun recalled.

Wang Jingyu had dropped out of school and rarely left his bed. "We were so worried seeing him like that," he said.

In May 2016 Xu showed Wang Jingyu a list of courses at Ulanhot Vocational School, including hairdressing, automobile repairs and childcare.

"My son excitedly told us that he wanted to study hairdressing," Wang Zhichun said.

As part of the poverty-relief program, Wang Jingyu received three months of training. "He didn't have to pay tuition costs and he also received about 180 yuan a month towards his medical fees," Xu said. "After graduation, we helped him find a job. He now earns 1,780 yuan per month."

"My son is a good hairdresser and even won second prize in a competition. I was so happy when he showed me his award during the Spring Festival holiday," Wang Zhichun said.

Last year, the Wang family received a total of 25,300 yuan of subsidies under the poverty relief program, much-needed support on their path out of poverty.

According to the regional government, about 556,000 people are currently living under the poverty line. This year, 200,000 of them will receive assistance.

China wants to lift the rural population out of poverty by 2020 to build a moderately prosperous society.

According to Wang Cheng, the village head, 26 households in his village have registered incomes below the poverty line. "Some 16 schools are taking part in the program, each is designated to help two to three households," he said.

With the help of Ulanhot No.4 Middle School, Bao Tiezhuang, 65, has been able to increase his standard of living.

"We were registered for the program in late 2015. We didn't know how to raise animals, so we chose to grow vegetables," Bao said.

Bao now has a newly built 200-square-meter greenhouse. The school comes to collect his vegetables. "So I don't have to worry about the sales," he added.

Last year, Bao's family made an annual income of over 10,000 yuan, far above the local poverty line of 3,400 yuan.

"Though I have moved beyond worrying about food or clothing, I still need to work hard for a better life," he said.